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Kimber - Heavenly Side of the
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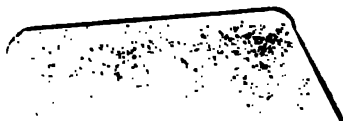


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Samuel M. Smith
for the United Kingdom

THE
HEAVENLY SIDE
OF THE
MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL
OF OUR
LORD AND SAVIOUR

BY
THOMAS KIMBER

FROM "FRIENDS' REVIEW," PHILADELPHIA

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THE HEAVENLY SIDE OF THE MINISTRY.

"HE WHOM WE WORK FOR, SEES THE FAIRER SIDE."

AMONG the various essays which have appeared of latter time in the organ of the Publishing Association of Friends, *Westward*, in favor of salaried pastorates, one entitled "The Business Side of the Ministry" would seem to claim at least a passing notice, as an exemplification of the extreme views to which some of the advocates of a paid ministry are drifting.

Its author, or authoress—for the "intensity" of some of its expressions would seem to bear the marks of a female hand rather than of a business man*—admits that the "article is cold and *ghastly* at times;" in which judgment

* We read, for example: "The work of the ministry is *intensely* spiritual, but ministerial work has an *emphatic* business side," etc. Again: "There are two things *intensely abhorrent in the eyes of God and all decent people*." One of these is "an able-bodied and well-to-do congregation laying their lazy length and full weight on a wide-awake godly minister, . . . while they withhold a worthy support, under the *dishonest and shameful pretext that they do not believe in a hireling ministry*," etc.

We read also of "The *enormous* last charge of our Saviour to preach the Gospel to every creature," etc. There is a pronoun used, however, in the course of the article which would imply that it was written by a man.

the sober reader will be inclined to join, so far at least as he may apprehend the expression of it.

The general line of argument is as follows :

"The *cheapest* things in the known world are salvation and righteousness. The *most expensive* things are sin and ungodliness." . . . "The amount of sin a minister can destroy should measure his commercial and spiritual value to the Church." . . . "A minister must be profitable or go at a low rating," etc.

The only parallel that we remember to this "ghastly" inventory may be found in the advertisements in English papers of certain prospective reversions of their Church livings, which are occasionally offered for sale to the highest bidder, even at this day ; and where a "proximity to the railroad station," or the "refinement and culture of the neighborhood," and the "advanced age or the infirmity of the present incumbent" are published, with the annual stipend, as important factors in estimating the market value of the purchase.

The *modus operandi* of the proposed arrangement is thus described :

"As soon as the matter becomes one of *religious investment*, looking to effectiveness or profitableness, then the Church, in all propriety and care for its own interests, should step to the front and say : 'We can use thee to a better advantage in Gospel or pastoral work than at the plough or tent-making.' And it is doubtful whether anyone should be recorded in the full sense as a minister until these conditions are met." . . .

"The question is purely a business one, and can only be settled on business principles."—*Christian Worker*, No. 19, pp. 217-218.

The simple statement of such views of the high and holy

calling of the ministry of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour would seem to be the only refutation they require.

One can imagine the Apostle Paul looking up for a moment with wondering pity, from his daily employment, at anyone making this proposition to him; or could almost hear Peter gravely replying to such an offer, as of old, "Thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

We are sure that neither the writer of that article, nor the editor of the *Christian Worker*, deliberately intended to cast any slur on the Apostolic doctrine or practice. But this sort of innuendo has become so habitual of late, that each new advocate of innovation seems to aim to give utterance to some more startling and pungent expression,* apparently in order to attract attention to his or her "advanced" views, until it has become needful at this critical juncture to place upon record some of these extravagant utterances, in the hope that their mere recital will awaken the general disapproval which they merit.

Very recently an editorial in the *Christian Worker*, on "Young Friends called to the Ministry," reiterates similar views though in more moderate language.

* One of the most prominent advocates of a salaried ministry said openly, at one of our meetings, in the presence of hundreds: "If the Apostle Paul chose to make tents for a living while he preached the Gospel, the Apostle Paul was perfectly at liberty to do so, so far as I am concerned." And again: "The question is simply one of bread and butter; show me the bread and butter, and I will show you the minister." Another, perhaps more forward in modern innovations, publicly denounced the obvious and generally received interpretation of the command of our Lord and Saviour to His disciples, "Freely ye have received, freely give," as "the devilish delusion of a half-saved Church." He held that the command applied to the hearers of the Word, rather than to the minister.

After declaring that "it has devoted, and continues to devote much attention to this subject, because it believes that upon a wise and righteous settlement of the questions now under discussion concerning the ministry, depends very largely the future prosperity of the Society of Friends," it goes on to quote with approval some sentiments of a "young man," whom it strongly recommends "as gifted and intelligent, well educated and sincere, and who has a clear call to the ministry of the Gospel."

Among other opinions of this young correspondent we find the following :

"I think the man who devotes his whole time to the ministry, who is accepted by Friends and whose gift is acknowledged, should have as certain a support as the clerk in my office who devotes his whole time to my affairs. . . . I have reached that point where I *must* preach and teach, but as to whether or not I must work with and among Friends I am *not* so certain," etc.

Now it is just such convictions, so honestly expressed, in regard to the calling and the reward of the Christian ministry, which it is the object of this essay if possible to modify and so far as they are mistaken to remove.

Professor Upham, in his excellent treatise on Mental Philosophy, while considering the only true motives of successful human action, relates an anecdote of D'Alembert the secretary of the French Academy of Sciences more than a hundred years ago. A young man had brought to him an elaborate solution of a difficult mathematical problem, with the appeal : "I have done this hoping to obtain a seat in the Academy." D'Alembert gravely replied to him : "Sir, with such motives you will never obtain one. Science must be loved for its own sake and not for the advantages to be derived from it."

If such entire purity of motive be essential to the successful pursuit of *scientific truth*, how much more pre-eminently so in the devotion of our lives and efforts to the advancement and promulgation of *religious truth*?

The annals of the Church of our Lord and Saviour, in all ages, contain we believe no record of the acceptable discharge of the solemn duties of the ministry of His Gospel, from any motives of self-interest or worldly advantage.

They do contain the records of a long roll of His faithful soldiers and servants, "of whom the world was not worthy," who suffered the loss of all things for His dear name's sake.

They tell of the persecution and banishment and imprisonment and torture, and the ignominious death of hundreds of thousands of the confessors and martyrs of the early Church; and of the ministers of His Gospel, who counted not their lives dear unto themselves that they might finish their course with joy, and the commission which they had received of the Lord Jesus to testify the glad tidings of the grace of God.

They recount, in more modern times, the devotion of the German and English Reformers; the glorious story of William Tyndale, for example, who gladly accepted exile and a fiery death, freely giving up his life as he had professed his willingness to do, "that he might give the English Bible to his native land."

They tell of the noble sacrifices of the Nonconformists of England and Scotland; of holy Rutherford, whose soul all aflame with his Saviour's love rejoiced for His sake in imprisonment, and even in separation from his beloved flock to whom for so many years he had preached the "truth as it is in Jesus," in all its purity and power. They tell of Richard Baxter and Archbishop Leighton and William Dell and many others, who relinquished high positions

of profit and honor, that they might maintain their fidelity to that "truth so pure of old."

They recount the long years that Bunyan spent in Bedford Jail because of his faithful adherence, in an ungodly age, to those sublime realities so vividly portrayed in that wonderful dream of the "Pilgrim's Progress," wrought out in his lonely dungeon; the clear visions of the City of Destruction and of Vanity Fair, of the Interpreter's House and of the Celestial City with its heavenly light falling back over the land of Beulah at the end of the Christian's journey.

They tell of the patient endurance of the early Friends—of Fox and Pennington, and Edward Burrough and William Dewsbury and hundreds of others,—many of whom languished and died in loathsome prisons for their faithful testimony to their Lord's simple truth.

They make honorable mention of the sufferings and labors and privations of the early Methodists in England and America, while spreading the knowledge of the Gospel over the land a century ago.

They tell us, in their earliest annals, of the worthies of the Old-Testament history, who bore witness to the same truth long ago, that the Lord's devoted followers must be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," "manifesting to all that they seek a city that hath foundations," and looking forward to the "eternal recompense of their reward."

Where then is the inducement to such a young man as the correspondent of the *Christian Worker* is represented to be, to choose for his vocation the ministry of the Gospel to which he "feels himself called?" What hope of reward, what assurance of support for himself or his family are afforded him?

"The world is all before him where to choose." We

read that "there are many kinds of voices in it," and that "no one of them is without signification." Some allure to worldly ease and pleasure, some promise earthly honor and advancement, some hold out a brilliant prospect of the riches and glory of this life. The "god of this world" says to the servant, as he said to his Lord and Master, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

On the other hand, a low, sweet voice is heard, whispering to his heart:

"If any man serve me let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honor" (John xii. 26).

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself [*renounce* himself literally], take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

"Verily I say unto you there is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, or lands, for my sake and for the Gospel's sake, but he shall receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark and Luke, R. V.).

It is "*the world to come of which we speak*," said the Apostle; and he must himself have first "tasted of the good Word of God and of the powers of the world to come," who can availingly proclaim them. And when he shall have known them not only to have overshadowed, but to have swallowed up, in his view, all the fleeting attractions and glory of this perishing world, he will count these as "less than nothing and vanity," compared with the glory of this great grace given to him, that he should be called to "preach unto the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ."

The priesthood of our Lord and Saviour and of His fol-

lowers is "made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." The warnings and the invitations of Christ's Gospel, the promises and judgments of the Lord, the mysteries and the revelations of God's purposes and rewards, all centre in the *eternities*, and are anchored "within the veil."

But, says, perhaps, our young friend; and with some show of reason: "Are there no guaranties of support for the Lord's servants? Must wife and children suffer, when he is called to the ministry of the Gospel, and the Church go free from all responsibility or charge?" Most assuredly not; but the trust of the servant must be in the Lord, and not in any contract he may make with the Church.

To all those who put their trust in Him our Heavenly Father's promises are boundless and unfailing. No one of His trusting children will ever be confounded or suffered to want. The Lord is very careful and tender of His faithful servants; and the command to "touch not His anointed and do His prophets no harm" covers everything that *touches* their interests, or their honor, or their service, and forbids the great harm and wrong that would result from their neglect. They are ambassadors of a king, and should be so honorably treated and cared for, by all His true subjects and people, for His great name's sake.

It is no part of our purpose to undervalue their claims; or to deny that the branch of the Church to which we belong, may have too lightly estimated them in the past and may too often have failed, however unconsciously, in its duty toward its great Head in the person of His faithful servants; as well as toward the spread of His Gospel and the interests of His kingdom, intrusted to its care, by neglecting to provide more abundantly for the needful expenses of their proclamation and advancement over the earth.

A solemn responsibility, at the great day of account, will undoubtedly rest upon all those who withhold the means with which God has intrusted them, or their personal influence in the Church, from such righteous and obvious duties.

But we *invert the order of His providence*, and may even rightfully forfeit our claim to the blessings promised to them who put their entire trust in His Word, if we make it a condition of our acceptance of God's call to His service that we should receive an assurance from any human organization (as His Church militant on earth must always be), of a pecuniary provision for ourselves or our families; or stipulate for a definite return for the devotion of our strength and our time to the proclamation of Christ's Gospel, or to the feeding of His sheep and lambs, which He hath made a *condition only of our love to Him* (John xxi. 15-17).

He is "Head of the Church and Head over all things to it," as well as our Lord and Master; and He knows that it is in His service we are primarily engaged.

If the Church fails in its duty, that will be no excuse for any failure in ours; and those who should put their hand to the plough and then draw back, or even "look back," longingly, He says "are not fit for the kingdom of God," and that His "soul hath no pleasure in them." Never let these words be spoken of any of us, dear fellow-ministers of the Gospel of Christ.

The keystone of the arch of God's covenant is contained in the central verse of the Bible, the 8th verse of the 118th Psalm. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." On this rests firmly the whole structure of the Church, the whole dependence of the soul.

George Müller, who still lives as a faithful witness of the abundant power and willingness of our covenant-keeping

God to provide all things needed, whether temporal or spiritual, testifies that *more than five millions of dollars* have been sent to him for the Lord's service without a single application to any human being, but solely in answer to the prayer of faith to Him who has declared "The silver and the gold are mine."

Such free-will offerings the minister of the Gospel may always accept, with perfect liberty of action; feeling a sense of dependence upon the Lord alone, who has power to turn the hearts of men "as a man turneth a water-course in the field," and who will incline them thus to respond to the faithful, devoted, single-eyed service of his trusting followers.

The difference is a vital one, not only to the messenger, but to the power and authority of his message, as well as to the purity and loyalty of his attitude toward his Lord and King.

"Standing between the living and the dead," whether in the world or in the professing Church, he is tempted by no flattering offers, deterred by no fearful apprehensions, from the plain fulfilment of his priestly duties and the faithful declaration of the "whole counsel of God;" "rightly dividing the Word of truth," and "feeding the flock of Christ with the sincere milk of that Word."

Such a devoted servant may place a humble estimate upon his own labors, but he may rest assured that his Master appreciates them. Much that seems to us poorly done our Lord accounts as "well done," because "done unto him." As with the tapestry-weavers, our side may seem rough and unfinished, but

"He whom we work for, sees the fairer side." *

* Dora Greenwell—"Life's Tapestry."

He accounts as "beautiful upon the mountains, the feet of those who preach the glad tidings of the Gospel of peace," who, "passing through the valley of Baca (dryness), make it a well" of living waters.

"Fear not, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward," He says to the least of his faithful servants.

In an old edition of the Life of Thomas Aquinas, there is on the title-page a quaint and yet beautiful wood-cut engraving of the venerable saint, kneeling before a vision of his Lord. "Thomas," the Saviour is saying, "thou hast done well, what dost thou choose for thy reward?" and the answer is :

"Give me thyself, my Lord,
Thyself as my reward."

Shall we not join him in his choice?

We read that "He that winneth souls is wise;" and "they that be wise shall shine as the firmament and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

Let none, therefore, be turned aside or discouraged "by reason of the way," by its toils, or hardships, or disappointments; or even by the very attrition of the contest which may seem to wear upon our strength and imperil the quiet of our souls, so that sometimes we would fain "fly away and be at rest."

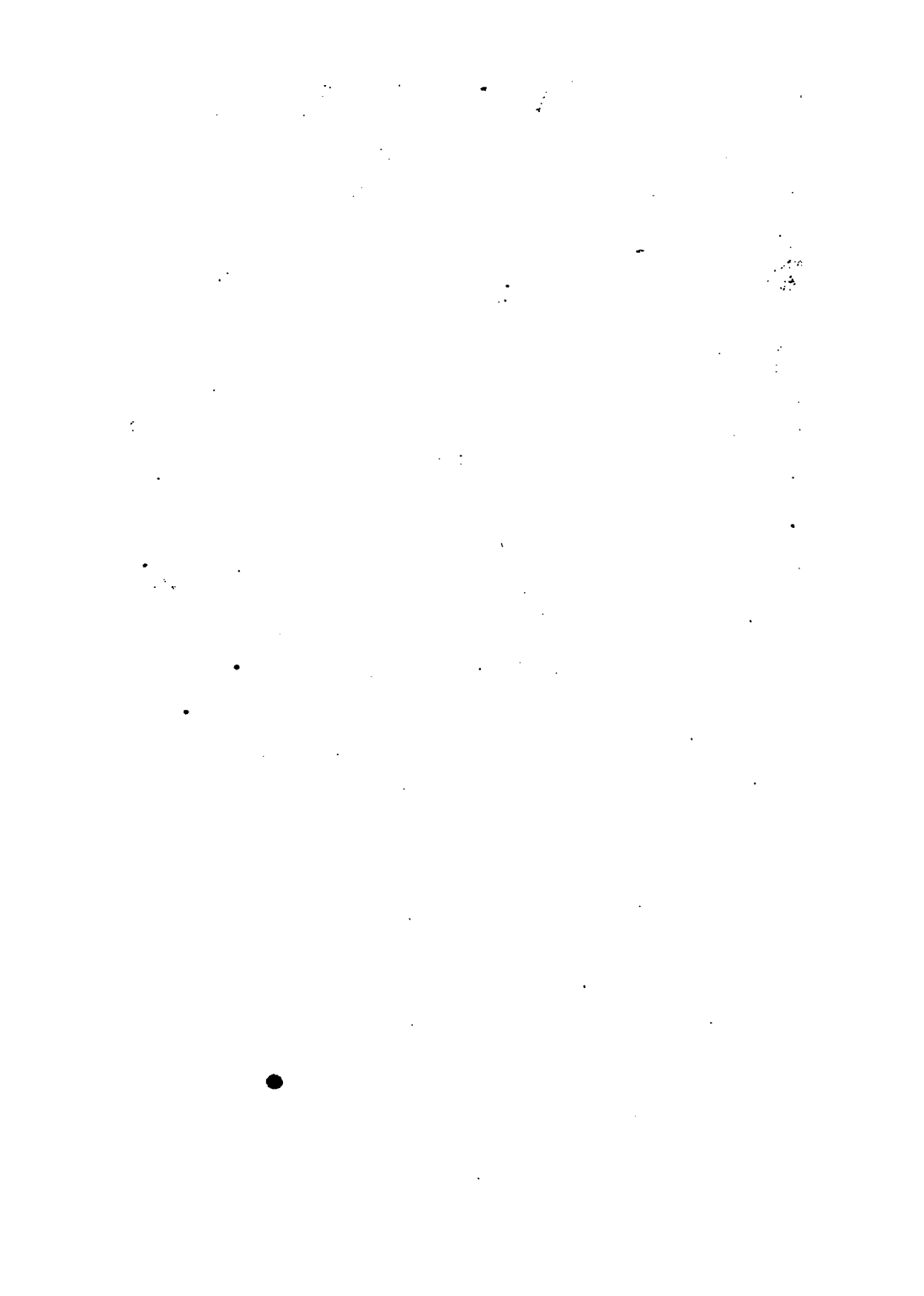
"Oh! let us not this thought allow—
The heat, the dust upon our brow,
Signs of the contest we may wear;
Yet thus we shall appear more fair
In our Almighty Master's eye,
Than if, in fear to lose the bloom
Or ruffle the soul's lightest plume,
We from the strife should fly.

" And for the rest—in weariness,
In disappointment, or distress—
When strength decays, or hope grows dim,
We ever may recur to Him,
Who has the golden oil divine,
Wherewith to feed our failing urns ;
Who watches every lamp that burns
Before His sacred shrine." *

THOMAS KIMBER.

RICHMOND HILL, LONG ISLAND, N. Y.,
Tenth Month 12, 1886.

* * "To a friend entering the ministry,"—Archbishop Trench.







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